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STATE HOSTS WOMEN'S HEALTH FORUM

INDIANAPOLIS—More than 200 women leaders from across the state gathered today to discuss ways to reduce tobacco use at the INFLuence Women's Health Forum at the Indiana Historical Society.

"Hoosier women have a powerful voice and the ability to make a difference in the health of our state," said First Lady Cheri Daniels, honorary chair of the Forum. "We have joined forces to take action to prevent the thousands of tobacco-related deaths each year in Indiana."

Attendees at the Forum, which was hosted by the Office of Women's Health and the Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Agency (ITPC), included legislators, heads of government agencies, media representatives, educators and presidents of universities, corporate CEOs, health care professionals, nonprofit and faith-based leaders, and young women.

"Some of us are mothers, wives, and sisters. All of us are daughters. What we share is a common interest in the health and welfare of our family and friends," said State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, M.D. "There are some powerful forces trying to influence women and minorities into engaging in unhealthy behaviors, like smoking. Tonight is about saying enough is enough. We need to keep our young people from becoming addicted to tobacco and to start them on the right path to living long, productive lives."

The INFLuence Women's Health Forum was sponsored by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

"This event is a great opportunity for Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Indiana to advance our mission to improve the lives of the people we serve and the health of our communities," said Angela Braly, who will become president and CEO of WellPoint, Inc., Anthem's Indianapolis-based parent company, on June 1. "We are committed to being an advocate for women in this important effort to prevent the harmful health effects of tobacco products."

Indiana is second highest in the nation for adult smoking, with 25 percent of adult women smoking. Nationally, 19 percent of women are smokers. State data show that 18 percent of pregnant women in 2004 smoked, which is nearly double the national average of 10.2 percent. Each year, 3,800 women die in Indiana from tobacco-related diseases.

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WOMEN'S HEALTH FORUM
ADD ONE

"One of the most efficient ways to bring down the smoking rate among women is to increase the price of cigarettes through a higher cigarette tax", said Karla Sneegas, executive director, Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation. "A one dollar per pack increase would result in 16,000 fewer smoking-affected births over the next five years."

According to a 2005 health survey, 36.7 percent of adult African Americans and 32 percent of adult Hispanics/Latinos in Indiana are current smokers. Tobacco use causes heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer. These diseases are the four leading causes of death for African Americans in Indiana, and among the top 10 leading causes of death for Hispanics/Latinos.

"Tobacco use is especially devastating to minority populations," said Nancy Jewell, president and CEO, Indiana Minority Health Coalition. "We can no longer tolerate tobacco companies targeting our communities with messages that endanger the health and well-being of minority citizens," said Nancy Jewell. She added, "Enough is enough!"

Smoking costs Indiana more than \$2 billion in direct medical costs. Meanwhile, according to the Federal Trade Commission, the tobacco industry spends \$475 million in advertising in Indiana each year.

"For every \$1 the state spends in prevention, the tobacco industry spends \$44 to market its deadly products in Indiana," said Victoria Almquist, director for Outreach for the National Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "Young women and all young Hoosiers deserve better."

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